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No. 5

Jackson Tenn

March 17th 1862

HEAD QUARTERS

Army of the Mississippi

Jackson, Tenn., March 17th, 1862.

GENERAL ORDERS.

NO. 8.

The following Regulations are announced for the observance of the troops of this Army, while on outpost service:

1. The commanders of all detached Army corps, Divisions, Brigades, or Regiments of this Army, on arriving at a position to be occupied, will carefully reconnoitre, personally and by staff officers, the ground in the vicinity and all roads and approaches thereto, for a distance of several miles, especially in the known direction of the enemy. The best positions for holding all such approaches under vigilant observation, and for the prevention of surprise, will be carefully selected for the advanced line of picket sentries, which shall not be less than one mile distant from the main body of the command, nor more than three miles. The force to be employed in this outpost service shall habitually be not less than one-fifth of the command, from which it may be detached, and the tour of duty will be for three days.

2. The post of the Regiment, Battalion, or detachment, on outpost service, will be selected at a convenient central point, about half a mile in rear of the front line to be occupied by sentinels; and *there* will be the reserve, and place for baggage and cooking. One-third of the command or detachment will be thrown forward in three equal parties, equi-distant from each other, to within two hundred yards of the extreme picket front; and from these detachments, smaller detachments, each of from three to six privates, with a commissioned or non-commissioned officer in charge, from which a continuous line of sentries will be established along the entire front to be held and observed, connecting at all times with the sentinels on the right and left, thrown forward either by the pickets, posts of the same Regiment, Battalion or Detachment, or established from other Regiments, Battalions or Detachments on outpost service. At night the number of sentinels will be decided.

3. Sentinels or pickets should be so established, as to observe as much, and as far as possible, while themselves concealed from observation by the enemy. Loud talking, singing, whistling, and fires, except at the reserve—and in very cold

weather, on the line of company or detachment reserves—is strictly prohibited. Citizens must not be allowed to stay or lounge about the picket posts, or converse with pickets; this is particularly enjoined; for, under the pretence of hospitality and the simulation of the simple countryman, an insidious spy may be lurking to discover our signals of recognition, countersigns, passwords, or other information, to be betrayed to our injury.

4. Officers, and non-commissioned officers and soldiers, on picket service, are at all times dressed and equipped. The commander of each outpost command will make frequent visits and inspections of his advanced detachments, picket posts, and front line of sentinels; and he will be responsible for any surprise of his lines; or lax, negligent performance of picket service by his officers and men, during the tour. He will give proper instructions to all under his command touching their several duties, and should satisfy himself that those instructions are well understood and rigidly executed. His Adjutant, or some other officer selected for the duty, will also visit each picket post and sentry, once each night, between 12 o'clock and daylight.

5. When a day signal of recognition has been arranged for any picket line, it will be demanded as soon as the parties see each other. At night parties approaching will be halted at a distance of sixty yards, if practicable, in a loud distinct tone, and the signal demanded. The party challenged will then require a response from the challenging party; this made, the latter will order the former to advance and give the countersign. Commanders of outposts will be careful not to prevent or delay the passing of cavalry pickets, or couriers with despatches; but when reasonable doubts arise as to the character of the party, he must be sent, under charge of guard, at once to the Headquarters of the nearest General Officer. A mounted man will not be required to dismount to give the countersign, after having made the proper signal, nor will the countersign be required in the day time. Great circumspection must be exercised in the use of signals to prevent their observation by lurking spies of the enemy.

6. An approach of the enemy must be resisted by the pickets as obstinately as practicable; the ground must only be yielded before an overwhelming force; they will then retire, fighting, on the reserve, where a stand will be made as long as practicable. If forced to retire, they will take up successive positions behind all advantageous shelter, and resolutely check and retard the advance of the enemy as long as possible. The best marksmen will be selected to cover the rear, while thus falling back, who will fire with deliberation as they retire. If pressed closely by the enemy, the command must be brought, if possible, to charge with the bayonet. The utmost care must be taken to prevent the men from crowding *en masse*, in falling back, as they will offer a target for artillery; and the men must be cautioned against and prevented from making a precipitate retreat from an outpost, under any circumstances.

7. While on outpost duty, no officer or soldier will be permitted to leave the outpost, without express authority from the commander, except upon a Surgeon's certificate. Commanders of outposts must remain constantly during the tour with

their reserve, except when visiting the picket posts and sentries, in which case, they will leave these instructions with the officer next in command.

8. In marching to and from outposts, the utmost order and discipline will be preserved. *No straggling must be permitted.*

9. As soon as the pickets may become seriously engaged with the enemy, any baggage at the post of the Reserve will be immediately sent to the post to the baggage of the Brigade to which the detachment belongs. Troops at outpost service are expected to bivouac.

10. As soon as the enemy shall have developed with certainty a design to advance, the commanders of outposts will at once despatch couriers to the General commanding the Corps or Division, to which the outpost belongs, giving information of the movements of the enemy, his probable strength, kind of force, and whether moving rapidly or not, route or routes taken, and such other information as may be of service. The report of mere rumored movements must always be avoided, or at least distinguished from what may be ascertained by the Military.

11. The commander of each outpost will publish these orders every four, before establishing his picket post, or posting his picket sentries; they will likewise be read to each company or detachment of the line of advanced picket parties.— They will be carefully preserved and transferred to the next commanders of the outpost.

12. Any person found in the act of eluding the outposts, and failing to halt when directed to do so, will be fired upon by the sentinels; and any person, if suspected of eluding the outposts, will be at once arrested and sent to the nearest Provost Marshal.

13. Cavalry pickets will be required by sentries and picket posts, to show authority of their Colonel or other Commander, for the service, before being allowed to pass; and couriers, with dispatches, must be furnished with passes properly signed.

14. The roll of troops at outposts must be called frequently during the day, and at Retreat there shall be an inspection of Arms and ammunition.

15. Staff officers may be sent by the General, or other officer in command, to inspect the outposts of his command.

16. Sentries must always be ready to fire, but will be sure of the presence of the enemy before firing, and will carefully avoid *false alarms*. Once satisfied that the enemy is at hand, the sentinel, though all defence on his part may be useless, must fire, as the safety of the Army may depend on the alarm he will then give.— Picket sentries should be relieved every hour, at night, and, as a precaution against surprise, should be instructed in some signal for the night before giving the countersign to others of the same outpost detachment.

17. In the immediate or near presence of the enemy, the main and company reserves must stand to their arms, for an hour immediately before daybreak.— Patrols will be made slowly, silently, and with the utmost precaution, to ensure against surprise or being mistaken for the enemy by our own men. When patrols are sent out, information of the fact must be spread throughout the picket posts and sentries.

Cavalry Pickets and Videttes.

18. In addition to Infantry outposts, the whole front of any force in position or camp must be completely observed and covered by cavalry; all commanding points of observation will be occupied; and all possible avenues of approach will be watched as near to the enemy's lines as the nature of the country will admit, or he will permit without substantial resistance. Positions must be avoided, which the enemy can approach under cover, or turn. There must be an unbroken line of communication, on the right and left, between all the posts and videttes. The horse should be relieved by his rider as much as possible, but when near the enemy, the vidette must never quit his rein, or take off bridle or saddle.

19. Cavalry picket detachments, when practicable, will consist of entire companies, and each company will cover its proportion of the front to be occupied. The picket posts, detached in advance, will not be of less than one non-commissioned officer, and three troopers, each. The Captain of each company will serve as *officer of the Guard*, for his company, on picket service, and a field officer, or senior Captain will be *officer of the day*, for the whole line of the Regiment, Battalion or squadron, on out post duty.

20. The Company Commander will be habitually with the reserve, established at a central point, in rear of the picket posts.

By command of GEN. BEAUREGARD.

THOMAS JORDAN,
A. Adj't Gen.

—OFFICIAL—

(Signed.) CLIFTON H. SMITH,
A. Adj't Gen.

"Official"

Geo G. James
C. A. G.

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